

## Observations in Deterring Predators

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Sometimes I'm asked, well, who are you? So let me say, I'm just a rancher who's worked on Game Refuges, BLM, USFS permits and Ranches for fifty plus years. I have come to notice some key behaviors that are relevant in all animals.

Rancher Predator Awareness began when the famous *Wolf OR7* crossed my ranch and entered California in 2011. My concern was that I already had too many loss's to predators. So the original effort was to deter *wolves*. What I have found is in the process of deterring, I have also made significant headway in deterring *mountain lions*, *black bear* and *coyotes* along with *wolves*. For this reason I do not tout *wolves* as much as I would like, but rather refer to all predators.

The original concept was the training of the cattle with the *Standing Solution* using pseudo predators. I still promote and practice that solution. But, that *Stockmanship skill* is an advanced set of skills that may challenge the user and its application and implementation of its use.



In my opinion animals are reactionary rather than strategic planners. Their behaviors are guided by instincts and opportunities.

Instincts are many, first and foremost is *self preservation*. Second would have to be *procreation*. The daily necessities such as hunger and water would fall under *self-preservation*.

I mention Instinct and daily necessities together, because instincts are rooted far deeper than daily behaviors. The reaction to fear invokes an instinctual reaction,

whereas daily routine is about satisfying a need or desire that directs behaviors, but on a level short of an instinctual reaction.

I see many commonalities between domestic animals and wildlife and realize that animals do have a comfort zone.

Whether it's a choice of home, habitat or actions, they have a preferred way, whether it's a predator's hunting habits that seek specific prey, or the family dog in his favorite spot. Each animal has it's comfort zone.

I believe that if you have predators commingling comfortably with stock you will eventually have a loss. It's just a matter of the opportunity becoming available to the predators.



With that said, predators must also have their dislikes. Something that creates an unfavorable feeling or an unpleasant situation.

Although the specific item may not invoke fear, it may simply be a dislike. What ever you call it, it's a response to avoid something. Mine happens to be broccoli.

The objective is to make the area with the stock an unsatisfactory comfort zone.

When we present something new to any animal, their response is a reaction to that stimulus. If we continue to present that stimulus, we are training the animal to become comfortable with it. This is desensitizing. Desensitizing is the first step in habituation.

It is one of the drawbacks of physical deterrents. By presenting a fixed stimulus, you are desensitizing the animal. Even changing or flashing lights, or loud bangs,

or music, the source remains fixed. The predator soon realizes the fixed positioning is not a threat and soon becomes comfortable with its functions.

This desensitizing effort, although not as modernized, is the same method man has used for thousands of years to get along with and use domestic animals such as horses.

As far as contacting or hazing, it is also a training effort in desensitization. Teaching the predator how far you are willing or able to pursue it.

Understanding that a stimulus engages the predators, our effort must present a new and unsolvable riddle with each encounter. We want to present an uncomfortable situation, which may or may not be *fear*. But with all of the intention of promoting a non-comfort zone.

Predators communicate by posture and sense of smell. The predators sense of smell is much more proficient than ours.

Scenting is a very affordable and effective deterrent and can be easily applied.

By using a scent as a deterrent, we are speaking to the animal in a language that they understand. Presenting a foreign and unsolvable riddle within their environment. Whether it presents a fear or an uneasiness, it simply eliminates that area from becoming a comfort zone.



Manufactured Scents are powerful and unknown to predators, they are also cheap and readily available in any grocery stores detergent or cleaner aisle. By placing them high and in the breeze, we are placing an effective deterrent. By changing the scent and it's placement every week to ten days we present an ever changing and unsolvable riddle, which is the deterrent. Promoting an unknown and an uneasiness that creates a low level *fear*.

There are two reactions to *fear*: *fight or flight*. With the proper application of the deterrent and nothing to fight, we are simply asking the predator to move on to somewhere more comfortable, that is *flight*.

It needs to be understood that predators are just that, predators. Deterring presence doesn't change the facts, it only relocates them. One must understand that deterring in ones own area may only encourage the predators to relocate their pressures to a new and more comfortable area.

An example; a Ranch in a Valley surrounded by Mountains, much like Northern California and Southern Oregon. The ranch or home base is producing hay for the winter months. So the cows go to the Mountains through the summer and return in fall. The predators are a risk where the cows summer, in the Mountains. That's where a lot of deterring efforts are located.



If you scent in the Mountains you may be driving the predators to your home base. As with any effort of a serious nature, one must develop a plan that suits your needs.

An observation might be that after placing deterrents in an area for a repeated length of time, the area seems to become a predator free zone. Even being void

of the birds such as ravens and magpies that are so prevalent prior to placing the scent deterrents.

By monitoring with camera traps, its easily apparent that the deterrents are effective.

The elusive nature of predators suggests that they are sensitive to their surroundings.

By presenting deterrents that engage those primary precautions, we are presenting the predator with a concern that engages basic instinctual reactions. Removing the fear or concern from our stock and redirecting it to the predators.

*Fear is a powerful deterrent. It promotes inaction when opportunity is presented. This concept is not exclusive to the animal kingdom.*

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